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## **Report of the Tenth Meeting of Focal Points for SPAs (Marseilles, 17-20 May 2011)**

### **Introduction**

1. At their Sixteenth Ordinary Meeting (Marrakesh - Morocco, November 2009), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention invited the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) to hold the Tenth Meeting of the Focal Points for SPAs in 2011.
2. The meeting was organized in Marseilles (France) at the "Mercure Marseille Centre" Hotel from the 17 to 20 May 2011, with the support of the French authorities.

### **Participation**

3. All the Focal Points for SPAs of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean were invited to attend the meeting or to designate their representative(s). The Meeting was attended by representatives of the following Contracting Parties: Algeria, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, the European Commission, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.
4. The Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), 100 Historic Sites Programme and RAC/Blue Plan were represented at the meeting.
5. The following institutions and organizations were represented by observers: ACCOBAMS, GFCM, RAMOGE, IUCN-Med, WWF Mediterranean Programme Office, Conservatoire du Littoral, French Marine Protected Areas Agency, Greenpeace International, MedPAN Association, Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, Oceana, Seagrass 2000 Association, Tour du Valat.
6. RAC/SPA acted as the secretariat for the Meeting.
7. The list of participants is attached as Annex I to the present report

### **Agenda item 1 - Opening of the Meeting**

8. The meeting was opened on Tuesday 17 May 2011 at 9.00 by the representatives of the host country, the Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and RAC/SPA.
9. Mr. Abderrahmen GANNOUN, the Director of RAC/SPA, welcomed the participants to the meeting and thanked the French authorities, especially the Ministry for the Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing, the Conservatoire du Littoral and the Agency for Marine Protected Areas for their help in organizing the meeting.
10. Ms Maria Luisa SILVA MEJIAS, Coordinator of the Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), said that the previous Conference of the Parties, held in Marrakesh in 2009, had adopted an integrated programme of work for the period 2010-2015, to include combating pollution, developing the Mediterranean network of protected areas with a high degree of representativeness and improved site management, integrated and sustainable

coastal zone management (ICZM), promoting models of sustainable production and consumption, and regional cooperation in adaptation to climate change. She emphasized that to put those priorities into practice, RAC/SPA must be guided by certain fundamental principles, such as the “polluter pays” principle, the precautionary principle and the ecosystems approach. The new two-year programme must take account of the new international and regional challenges, and be in step with the Aichi Strategic Plan for 2010-2020. She pointed out that the activities of RAC/SPA, like those of other MAP components, must also take account of the growing regional uncertainties. The entry into force of the “Offshore” Protocol and the ICZM Protocol would further strengthen the Barcelona system.

11. Ms Sandrine SELLIER-RICHEZ, representing the Maritime Prefecture of the French Mediterranean, welcomed the participants and thanked the authorities which had helped to organize the meeting. She drew attention to the significant political and economic challenges involved in managing the marine environment, especially in the light of the important recent and forthcoming international meetings on biodiversity, and said that France had an active policy of managing and protecting marine and coastal resources, as evident from the *Etats généraux du Grenelle de la mer* and its efforts to consult all the actors involved, including the fisheries and transport sector. She wished the participants every possible success in their discussions and recommendations and a pleasant stay in Marseilles, the emblematic Mediterranean city, and declared the meeting officially open as of Tuesday 17 May 2011 at 10.00.

#### **Agenda item 2 - Rules of Procedure**

12. The internal rules adopted for meetings and conferences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution and its related Protocols (UNEP/IG.43/6, Appendix XI) apply *mutatis mutandis* to the present meeting.

#### **Agenda item 3 - Election of Officers**

13. After informal consultations, the Meeting unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairperson:	Ms. Anne REOCREUX (France)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Mr. Robert TURK (Slovenia) Ms. Lara SAMAHA (Lebanon)
Rapporteur:	Ms. Saba GUELLOUZ (Tunisia)

#### **Agenda item 4 - Adoption of the Agenda and organisation of work**

14. The Secretariat introduced the provisional agenda distributed as UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/1, and the annotated version in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/2. The meeting considered both documents and agreed, on a proposal by the delegations of France and Spain, to consider the question of ecologically or biologically significant areas (EBSAs) under agenda item 6. The agenda for the meeting, Annex II to this report, was then adopted by the meeting.

15. The meeting approved the organization of work proposed by the Secretariat, set out in the annotated provisional agenda for the meeting (document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/2).

**Agenda Item 5 - Status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean**

**A) Reports of the Parties on the implementation at national level of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD)**

16. The Secretariat informed the meeting that in advance of the Tenth Meeting of Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas, RAC/SPA had invited the Focal Points for the SPAs to provide a report on the implementation, in their respective countries, of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (the SPA/BD Protocol). Those reports should be provided for the period from January 2008 to December 2009, following the format adopted for that purpose at the Fifteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties.

17. The Secretariat introduced document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/3, entitled "Report on the status of implementation of the SPA/BD Protocol" for the period January 2008 - December 2009, which constitutes a summary of the reports submitted by the Focal Points of RAC/SPA. These reports had been submitted either through the new online reporting system, or as electronic files using the same format as the online system. It was evident from the national reports, compiled by the 15 Parties which had completed the form, that considerable progress had been made in implementing the Protocol, especially through regulation. The aspects best handled were those relating to the regulation of research activities and the regulation or prohibition of all activities likely to have an impact on the SPAs, as well as the launch of impact studies before taking any decisions on activities likely to affect protected areas and/or species and their habitats. The protection and management of the species in Annexes II and III of the Protocol also seem to be well covered on the regulatory plane. Few Parties mentioned encountering any difficulties in the matter of legislation, and the aspects most frequently mentioned are the regulatory procedures and the administrative framework.

18. As for the SPAs, the institutional arrangements for the overall management of each SPA and for covering both land and marine areas now seem to be well in hand for most Parties, but there is still work to be done in setting up management plans for the SPAs, although many Parties (almost 40%) say they are willing to tackle this aspect.

19. There has been an increase in the number of SPAMIs, with the inclusion over the reporting period of eight SPAs in the SPAMI List and the addition of one country to the list of Parties with a SPAMI on their territory. It is also important to point out that one of the Parties is planning to create 2 SPAMIs in the eastern basin by the end of 2011, which would improve the geographical representativity of the SPAMIs.

20. As regards the protection and conservation of species, few activities have been carried out by the Parties, and the difficulties which have been mentioned are due mainly to shortage of financial resources and also of technical skills.

21. Finally, as regards action plans for endangered species, those best represented among the Parties are the action plans for birds, monk seals and marine turtles. Taking all the action plans together, the most activity by the Parties has taken place in the area of regulation, research programmes and the establishment of SPAs. Because of the adoption of the Action Plan concerning coralligenous and other Mediterranean bio-concretions in 2008, the online form needs to include points relating to that action plan in time for the next session.

22. At the end of the presentation, the representative of Greece emphasized the need for the reporting period and the submission of the document to match up more closely, because difficulties arose if the time interval between them was too long.

23. The representative of Slovenia said it would be useful to have cumulative reports showing all the activities being carried out by the Parties to implement the Protocol, not merely those relating to the reporting period.

24. The representative of the Coordinating Unit noted the suggestions and said the necessary action would be taken.

25. The representative of Greenpeace mentioned the importance of creating marine protected areas and SPAMIs in open seas, and expressed regret that no new proposals in that respect had been made during the reporting period. She said it was a matter of urgency for the Parties to demonstrate their commitment to cooperating in the designation of new SPAMIs in the open seas, and in the identification of the conservation sites which they regarded as a priority.

## **B) Report on the progress made in RAC/SPA activities**

26. The Director of RAC/SPA gave a brief presentation on the Centre's activities since the last meeting of the Focal Points, referring to the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4 ("Progress report on RAC/SPA activities"). He said that the activities had been carried out in accordance with the MAP strategic programme for the period 2010 – 2015, having regard to the international calendar and the main events which had taken place in the region, including the 10<sup>th</sup> COP of the CBD, the entry into force of the ICZM Protocol and events in the Arab countries of the region. Most of the activities of RAC/SPA during the current biennium had been aimed at helping Mediterranean countries to halt the loss of marine and coastal biodiversity, and to develop a representative network of SPAs. RAC/SPA had focused its activities on three main areas: (i) the protection of endangered species, (ii) the establishment of new SPAs, and (iii) improving the management of SPAs.

27. The Director of RAC/SPA explained that the Centre's activities had been carried out in close collaboration with several partners, and that the activities would be described in detail under agenda item 6.

## **C) SPAMIs List**

28. After a general recapitulation of the SPAMIs which had been included in the List up to 2009, the Secretariat informed the meeting that it had received seven requests for inclusion in the SPAMI List, two from France (Blue Coast Marine Park, Embiez Archipelago-Six Fours), three from Italy (the Porto Cesareo Marine Protected Area, the Capo Carbonara Marine Protected Area and the Marine Protected Area of Penisola del Sinis-Isola di Mal di Ventre) and two from Lebanon (Tyre Coast Nature Reserve and Palm Islands Nature Reserve). In accordance with the procedures laid down in the SPA/BD Protocol, these requests had been transmitted to the Focal Points for consideration (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/15, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/16, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/17, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/18, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/19, UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/20 and UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/21).

29. The floor was then given to delegations of the countries submitting sites for inclusion in the SPAMI List.

30. The delegation of France highlighted the interest of the Embiez Archipelagos – Six Fours site, with species of conservation interest and where the management involves a local authority. It gave a description of the measures taken to mitigate the impact of human activity in the area. The Blue Coast Marine Park was an example of a successful initiative by local authorities and fishermen. The area in question, based in two fishing reserves for fisheries resources management, may prove a model for this approach to conservation.

31. Following the presentation of the two SPAMI proposals, the meeting decided to submit both sites to the Parties for inclusion in the SPAMI List.

32. The delegation of Italy took the floor to present the three sites proposed by its country for inclusion in the SPAMI List. The areas concerned had outstanding features, such as red coral, suitable monk seal habitats, specific geological features such as lagoons, or species such as unique sponges and other interesting benthic species.

33. Following the presentation by Italy of its SPAMI proposals, the meeting decided to submit the three sites to the Parties for inclusion in the SPAMI List.

34. The representative of Lebanon took the floor to present her country's two SPAMI proposals. Both were nature reserves with a long history and a participatory approach to management alongside local bodies. She emphasized that the areas in question were of outstanding value for species and habitats and had appropriate management plans.

35. Following the presentation of the two SPAMI proposals from Lebanon, the meeting decided to submit both sites to the Parties for inclusion in the SPAMI List.

36. The Executive Secretary of GFCM congratulated RAC/SPA and the Parties on the new proposals. He mentioned the recommendations adopted by the GFCM at its last session concerning bycatch mitigation measures for monk seals, turtles, sharks and marine birds, and the establishment of a regional management plan for red coral. He thanked RAC/SPA for its support in preparing those recommendations, and told the meeting that the GFCM was particularly interested in collaborating with RAC/SPA in defining SPAMI management measures of relevance to fisheries.

37. He informed the participants that a coordination meeting was planned in coming months to investigate ways and means of strengthening cooperation between GFCM and UNEP/MAP-RAC/SPA, with a view to further harmonization of the decisions adopted by the two organizations. He suggested that the meeting be open to other partner organizations.

38. The delegation of France pointed out that her country encourages cooperation between the MAP organs and the regional fisheries organizations on the issues related to fisheries activities (GFCM and ICCAT), and she recalled the importance of this collaboration, in particular in the context of the establishment of MPAs. She also recalled the Memorandum of Understanding established between the RAC/SPA and the GFCM since 2008. This approach is in line with Decision IG.19/13 of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Marrakech, 2009) which stressed on the necessity to strengthen links with MAP and existing regional fisheries organizations and other relevant organizations *“in order to ensure sustainable management of resources, including on the high seas, as appropriate”*.

39. The Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS proposed the inclusion of the cetacean conservation aspect in the management measures applicable to the two areas proposed by Lebanon for inclusion in the SPAMI List.

40. Introducing the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/5, the Secretariat informed the meeting of the findings of the periodic ordinary review of the areas included in the SPAMI List in 2003 carried out during the current biennium, in accordance with the procedure adopted by the Contracting Parties (UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.17/10; Annex V).

41. For the 2010-2011 biennium, a periodic ordinary review was undertaken of the two Spanish sites which had been included on the SPAMI List in 2003 by the Thirteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (UNEP(DEC)/MED IG.15/11):

- Parque nacional marítimo terrestre del Archipiélago de Cabrera,
- Acantilados de Maro-Cerro Gordo.

42. The Secretariat explained that the Technical Advisory Committees had recommended maintaining the SPAMI status of those two sites.

43. The representative of Spain described the ways in which his country had supported the assessment team and the procedure carried out in March 2011. Commenting on the history and present of the two areas, he explained that Cabrera National Park was seen as a model for the Mediterranean and that Maro-Cerro Gordo protected area was a pristine zone in an area of high tourist pressure.

44. Spain intended to create new MPAs with the aim of building a coherent network and achieving 10 % of oceans preserved by 2020. It was working on 5 new MPAs, three of which were in the Mediterranean Sea. In the next few years Spain would be making new proposals for SPAMIs to the Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

45. The meeting considered the findings of the review and recommended that the two SPAMIs remain subject to the ordinary review procedure.

46. The Secretariat informed the meeting that for the 2012-2013 biennium, the periodic ordinary review would deal with the sites included in the SPAMI List in 2005, namely :

- The Banc des Kabyles marine reserve (Algeria)
- The Habibas islands (Algeria)
- The Portofino marine protected area (Italy).

47. The representative of Algeria expressed the willingness of his country to develop a marine protected areas network. He emphasized the need of RAC/SPA assistance to carry out the expected review of the Banc des Kabyles marine reserve and the Habibas islands.

48. The representative of the Conservatoire du Littoral (France) mentioned ongoing work in Algeria with the support of his organization and he indicated that such activities could contribute to ordinary review of the two Algerian SPAMIs, which will also optimize the use of the available means.

49. The Secretariat introduced document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/6 ("Draft approach to facilitate proposals for inclusion in the SPAMI List of areas located on the high seas or in areas where the limits of national sovereignty or jurisdiction have not yet been defined"). That document should be read in conjunction with information document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.395/Inf.3, on the legal aspects relating to the establishment of marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Mediterranean.

50. The Secretariat explained that that approach had been worked out in close collaboration with the MAP Coordinating Unit, pursuant to a request from the Bureau of the Contracting Parties, and that a group of independent legal experts and

representatives of international and regional organizations had met to discuss and elaborate the approach.

51. Several delegations commented on the document and suggested changes to its title and substance. Following the discussion, the Secretariat prepared a second version of the document, reflecting the comments and proposals made by delegations. The meeting considered the second version and invited the Secretariat to submit it to the Contracting Parties. It was however agreed to allow a 10-day interval following the meeting to enable the Focal Points to send in any further comments. The final version of this document is contained in Annex III to this report.

#### **D) Amending Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol**

52. The Secretariat said that in accordance with the request made by the Parties at their most recent meeting, and the Marrakesh Declaration encouraging greater collaboration with regional organizations in order to improve protection for the most threatened Mediterranean species, RAC/SPA had continued work on the amendment of Annexes II and III to the Protocol. Document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/7 gave an overview of the extent to which the species included in Annex III to the Protocol were covered by international conventions relating to the Mediterranean, and of the activities carried out by other organizations. Several initiatives had been taken for fish species, in particular, but it seemed desirable to step up efforts for exploited and/or endemic invertebrate populations, to further strengthen cooperation with the partners concerned, and to assess the effectiveness of the conservation of the most threatened target species.

53. The representative of France emphasized the importance of looking for synergy between the relevant international conventions for setting up national action plans for the conservation of threatened species.

54. The representative of Greenpeace expressed support for the proposals by RAC/SPA, especially as regards elasmobranch species, and drew the attention of delegates to the need to include Blue fin Tuna in Annex II to the Protocol.

55. The Secretariat, referring to the procedure for amending Annexes II and III, explained that in the absence of a specific mandate it was not the role of the Secretariat to make proposals for amendments at future meetings of Focal Points. The meeting decided in favour of mandating the RAC/SPA to propose new amendments. Such proposals must reach the Parties six months before the meeting of Focal Points for SPAs which would have to consider them. That interval would enable the necessary consultations to be held at the national and European levels before the proposals were considered by the meeting of Focal Points.

#### **E) Future orientations of SAP BIO**

56. The Secretariat informed the meeting of the status of implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (SAP BIO) in the Mediterranean Region (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.4).

57. Referring specifically to the chronic problem of funding shortages, the Secretariat retraced the steps taken to remedy such problems by developing two major projects relating, respectively, to the development of protected areas in coastal zones and in open seas, relying on external funds. Mention was also made of the significant progress achieved by assessing the status of biodiversity in countries, and other priority

environmental issues, including climate change. Among the results recently obtained, mention was made of the reports on climate change published by RAC/SPA and the reports on biodiversity submitted to the present meeting.

58. The Secretariat introduced document (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/8), dealing with the note on the future orientations of SAP BIO in the light of the decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10 to the CBD, Nagoya, 2010). It was explained that the note summarized the key decisions of COP 10 and set out a road map to assist Mediterranean countries in taking action to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, adopted at Nagoya. He pointed out that since the Mediterranean region already had the Strategic Action Plan for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (SAP BIO), the proposed road map took account of its principal features and considered the options for defining new directions for the SAP BIO in the light of the guidelines for the period up to 2020 set out in the Strategic Plan adopted at Nagoya, as well as other relevant decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the CBD (the Aichi Strategic Plan). The proposals in the note were designed to translate the Aichi Strategic Plan into recommendations and proposals for action to guide the work of the MAP and the partner organizations concerned in the conservation and sustainable use of Mediterranean marine and coastal biological diversity. The implementation of the recommendations in the note would contribute to assisting the Mediterranean countries to achieve the objectives adopted for the CBD for the period 2011-2020.

59. He also informed the meeting that the contents of the note had been considered at a consultation meeting organized by RAC/SPA at Tunis on 4 and 5 April 2011, at which several organizations involved in the conservation of Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity were represented.

60. The representative of Lebanon recalled that when SAP BIO was in preparation it had been intended that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) would finance the implementation of the national priorities which had been identified, but the MedPartnership had chosen only two of the priority topics identified by SAP BIO. That made it important to plan a fundraising strategy in the process of updating the SAP BIO.

61. The representative of France thanked the Secretariat for its proposal to update the SAP BIO in the light of the Aichi advances. She mentioned the need to find synergies between the process of updating the SAP BIO and the events which would be taking place in 2012 and 2013, such as the World Congress on Protected Areas, to be held in France in 2013.

62. The representative of Greece said it would be logical to undertake the revision and updating of the SAP BIO halfway. In line with that it would be more consistent for the Contracting Parties to consider document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/8 as a set of guidelines rather than a document to be adopted.

63. The representative of Morocco said it would be appropriate to update the SAP BIO, given all countries were expected to update their national action plans for biodiversity, and for that purpose it was important to ensure greater coordination among the national agencies concerned.

64. The Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS emphasized the importance of communication between those responsible, at national level, for the various conservation instruments, so that a picture could be drawn up of the developing state of knowledge. That would help in reviewing the priorities defined at the beginning of the SAP BIO process. She repeated that the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS was willing to lend its support

to countries in conserving cetaceans, and explained that a system had been introduced to invite bids for small projects intended for developing countries and countries with economies in transition (available on the ACCOBAMS website : [www.accobams.org](http://www.accobams.org)).

65. At the end of the discussion, the Meeting decided to submit the orientation note, as amended by the meeting, to the Contracting Parties. The text of the note to be submitted to the Parties is contained in Annex IV to this report.

#### **Agenda Item 6 - Progress made in RAC/SPA activities**

66. The Director of RAC/SPA gave a brief presentation on the principal directions of the work of RAC/SPA, and explained that detailed presentations of its activities would be made under the agenda item by the Centre's staff members responsible for the programmes.

#### **A) Inventorying, mapping and monitoring Mediterranean coastal and marine biodiversity**

67. The Secretariat, referring to the relevant sections of document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4, gave a presentation on the activities conducted by RAC/SPA, since the Ninth meeting of the Focal Points, in inventorying, mapping and monitoring coastal and marine biodiversity. Most of those activities involved assistance to countries in setting up networks for monitoring key habitats, and in mapping and characterizing significant benthic habitats and filling in gaps in their distribution.

68. The Secretariat introduced the Draft Guidelines for the standardization of methods for mapping and monitoring marine Magnoliophyta in the Mediterranean (Document UNEP(DEPI)MED WG.359/9), while explaining the context of its elaboration, its objectives and its various chapters.

69. The Secretariat introduced the draft proposals for standardized methods for inventorying and monitoring coralligenous and rhodolites communities and their main species (Document UNEP(DEPI)MED WG.359/10). The Secretariat representative thanked the Italian authorities, and especially ISPRA, for their logistical support in organizing the expert meeting held in Rome on 7 and 8 April 2011 in order to finalize the proposed standardized methods.

70. The representatives of Algeria and Montenegro paid tribute to the work of the Secretariat, and thanked RAC/SPA for the assistance given to their countries in inventorying marine flora and fauna and mapping Posidonia meadows. They were anxious for that assistance to continue.

71. The representative of France welcomed the work done by RAC/SPAS to establish a common methodology, while taking account of specific national characteristics, and emphasized the importance of ensuring a wide dissemination and appropriation of this tool.

72. The representative of the MAP Coordinating Unit commented that inventorying tools of that kind were well suited to the needs of the Mediterranean regional monitoring system which had been recommended following the development by MAP of the ecosystem approach.

73. The representative of Greece congratulated RAC/SPA on its work, which was a significant tool for the conservation and protection of habitats. She suggested a change

to the document, which was agreed by the meeting.

74. An observer pointed out that RAC/SPA had developed a geographic information system (GIS) containing information on the distribution of coralligenous habitats and marine vegetation in the Mediterranean, and that the inventorying tools would enable the GIS to be updated.

75. The representative of Italy emphasised that pelagic habitats were not adequately reflected by the Standard Data-entry Form (SDF). He suggested that RAC/SPA should coordinate the preparation of a reference list of Mediterranean pelagic habitats types, to be added to the habitat reference lists of the SDF.

76. Following the remarks by the representative of Italy concerning the importance of working to define pelagic habitats, the Secretariat representative reminded the meeting of the work already done in that area, and especially the preparation, in conjunction with the IUCN-Med, of the report "Status of knowledge on the Mediterranean pelagic ecosystem: an overview of the oceanographic and biological processes" He suggested setting up a working group to define types of pelagic habitats, on the basis of that study.

77. The meeting endorsed the draft guidelines for the standardization of methods of mapping and monitoring marine Magnoliophyta in the Mediterranean, as amended, and the draft proposals concerning standardized methods for inventorying and monitoring the coralligenous/rhodolites and their main species. Those documents appear, respectively, in Annexes V and VI to this report.

## **B) Protecting vulnerable habitats, species and sites**

### **B.1. Activities concerning Specially Protected Areas**

78. The Secretariat presented the activities developed by RAC/SPA since the last meeting of Focal Points for SPA, regarding the establishment and management of marine and coastal protected areas, by referring to the relevant sections of the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4. The actions carried out in the frame of the implementation of the "Regional Working Programme for the Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean, including the High Sea»" were presented, notably the progress of two regional projects aimed to improve the representativeness of the Mediterranean network of marine and coastal protected areas: "Regional Project for the Development of a Mediterranean Network of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MPAs) through the Creation and Management of MPAs" (MedMPAnet project), included in the Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem (MedPartnership), and the "Project for the creation of SPAMIs in the Open Seas, including the Deep Seas"

79. The Secretariat pointed out that the continuation of the activities of the project for establishing SPAMIs in open sea during the next biennium, 2012-2013, would have to be financed by raising funds from external sources.

80. The representatives of Croatia, Morocco and Tunisia thanked RAC/SPA for its support through the MedMPAnet Project and informed the meeting about the activities being implemented in this context by their respective countries and the measures undertaking to adapt the project activities to their national needs and context.

81. The representative of Lebanon announced that 18 sites are pre-selected for a network of MPAs in her country with support of IUCN and AECID. Inventory and cartography of three sites will be done, in the aim of preparing the technical documents

needed for proposing their declaration as MPAs. Three more sites are proposed to be worked out (field surveys, biodiversity inventory and cartography) with RAC/SPA within the context of the MedMPAnet project. She proposed to establish a mechanism to activate an expert pool to provide advice, upon request, to national authorities on MPAs management issues.

82. The representative of the Conservatoire du Littoral (France) underlined that partnerships help to cope with budgetary constraints and that economic indicators will much help to work on MPAs issues. He mentioned successful cooperation with several southern Mediterranean countries.

83. The representative of Oceana informed the meeting about the MedNET project, an MPA development initiative based on seamounts in the Mediterranean Sea. Further information on the project is available in the website of Oceana.

84. Answering a question from the representative of the European Commission regarding the degree of synergy of data collection by RAC/SPA with other initiatives, RAC/SPA emphasised that these works are done with full exchange of communication with its partners. In this context, the representative of MedPAN South Project mentioned further activities linked to the MedMPAnet project and remarked that databases and work of both projects are fully coordinated.

85. The representative of Turkey asked for the priority area in the North Levantine Sea to be excluded or be re-evaluated to more clearly define the limits, considering that a sizeable part of it concerns its country waters. He also expressed his Country disposition to collaborate regarding the open seas conservation in the Aegean Sea.

86. The representative of the European Commission congratulated on that move to aid advancing the conservation of the eastern basin. He considered that development since the last extraordinary SPA Focal Points meeting (Istanbul, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010) was slow. He further advised to try to get more speed on the system to agree at least two or three areas going on to allow starting a coherent network.

87. Several delegations emphasised that establishing SPAMIs is a long process, pointing out the importance of the consultation steps at national level for ensuring the success of cooperation initiatives undertaken by States to jointly propose SPAMIs. It was also stressed that since States remain sovereign, it was *in fine* up to them to propose SPAMIs. In this context, it was suggested that the European Commission should encourage European States to propose SPAMIs, including in open sea and deep sea areas.

88. The representative of Greece emphasised that in defining the limits of SPAMIs in open sea areas including deep sea areas, primary consideration should be addressed to ecological criteria. However, equal consideration should be ascribed to international law, in particular the Convention on the Law of the Sea, especially where there is reference to deep sea areas, since these involve areas of continental shelf which must be delineated in accordance with the above mentioned convention.

89. Following a request of the SPA Focal Points of France and Spain, who asked adding to the meeting agenda a topic on information and exchanges regarding the subject "ecologically or biologically significant areas" – EBSAs, the Secretariat has presented a note on the identification of EBSAs in the Mediterranean (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/CRP.1) distributed during the meeting.

90. The Secretariat presented the process launched by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), recalling that scientific criteria as well as scientific orientations for the identification of EBSAs had been adopted by the Conference of the Parties in 2008 and that the Conference of the Parties of 2010 had allowed to detail the mechanisms to identify EBSAs through the application of scientific criteria.

91. It was further recalled that during the 10<sup>th</sup> COP, the Parties, other governments and the competent intergovernmental organisations were encouraged to cooperate, collectively or in a regional or sub-regional basis, accordingly, in order to identify and adopt appropriate conservation and sustainable use measures of the Ecologically or biologically significant areas, according to their competences.

92. Recalling the works undertaken by RAC/SPA in the frame of the project to create SPAMIs in the open seas, including the deep seas, presented and discussed during the Extraordinary meeting of SPA Focal Points, held in Istanbul last 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, the Secretariat underlined that EBSAs had been identified following scientific and ecological criteria during the process of biogeographic classification driving to the identification of priority areas of conservation.

93. The Secretariat pointed out the importance of valorizing at world level the works undertaken in the Mediterranean, proposing for that purpose that the Parties give the mandate to the Secretariat to approach the CBD Secretariat in order to submit the results of the work already done following the procedure established during the Nagoya Conference.

94. The representative of France has recalled that the results presented during the Extraordinary meeting of Focal Points at Istanbul follow the sense of the engagements taken by the States during the COP 10 of the CBD in 2010, adding that France encourages all the States to adhere to the exercise launched by the RAC/SPA. She further indicated that following the need to share knowledge and means, and in a general context of budgetary restrictions which will be certainly narrowed in the future, the work already undertaken in the framework of the Barcelona Convention constitutes a solid base for the regional identification of EBSAs, as demanded in application of the decisions taken in the frame of the CBD.

95. Many delegations acknowledged the Secretariat the work provided for the identification of priority areas for conservation in the Mediterranean. They supported the Secretariat proposal to contact the CBD Secretariat to present the results of EBSA identification in the Mediterranean as a contribution by all the Mediterranean countries to the fulfilling of those CBD objectives, at the same time that following the synergy requested by the Parties to the different international and regional instruments for biodiversity conservation.

96. The representative of Spain expressed the interest of his country to reinforce the cooperation among France and Spain on the EBSA subject, in both the frames of the Mediterranean Action Plan and the OSPAR Convention.

97. The Secretariat informed that the set of documents related to the biogeographical classification prepared in the project framework were presented in a CD distributed during the meeting, and that it would be indeed important to transmit to the CBD the set of references available to support the scientific approach for the identification of EBSAs in the Mediterranean, based on the available data.

98. It further detailed that the results to be transferred to the CBD would concern only the EBSAs, and not the priority areas of conservation.

99. As conclusion of the discussion on the EBSA topic, the meeting agreed to propose to the Parties to mandate the Secretariat to contact the Secretariat of the CBD in order to present the works of identification of EBSAs in the Mediterranean as a contribution to the world process.

## **B.2. Implementing Action Plans for the conservation of species and habitats, adopted in the MAP context**

100. The Secretariat presented, for each action plan, a synthesis of the activities carried out, referring to the relevant sections of the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4, and gave its proposals as regards the implementation of each of the action plans during the next biennium.

### Action Plan for managing the Mediterranean monk seal:

101. The Secretariat described activities under the Action plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal, relating primarily to assistance in characterizing and monitoring monk seal habitats and populations, carried out in cooperation with the national institutions concerned. Referring to document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.6, it also presented the process to establish regional/sub-regional programmes for the conservation of the monk seal. It pointed out also that the recommendations proposed by RAC/SPA for measures to mitigate the interaction of fishery activities with endangered species, especially the monk seal, had been endorsed by the GFCM and its scientific advisory committee. The Secretariat reported that in the context of its cooperation with the secretariat and the members of the GFCM, RAC/SPA was drawing up a list of the existing caves being of importance for the monk seal in the Mediterranean.

102. Turkey representative thanked the support to projects on monk seals populations in the Antalya-Mersin-Hatay coastal sectors. He informed that an update of the national action plan was ongoing, also with RAC/SPA support.

103. The representative of Cyprus asked RAC/SPA for support to promote Natura 2000 network to protect monk seals, notably for the management plans in Cavo Grecko, in the East of Cyprus, and Akamas, in the West. Deploying camera traps would help collecting further data on the reproduction of the species in the area.

104. The EC representative emphasized the alarming situation of the species in the region, and notably its critical situation in North Africa, where conservation actions are needed without delay.

105. Greece representative mentioned that bycatch mitigation measures is a matter that must be seen with sensitivity as it concerns a critically endangered species and big part of the island and insular population of Greece. A LIFE project was done by a NGO to search for mitigation of conflict between fisheries and the species in Greece. She asked for this project to be taken into consideration for bycatch mitigation.

106. The delegate of Tunisia asked RAC/SPA to aid to install camera traps in La Galite Archipelago and keep working on that sense.

107. GFCM Executive Secretary expressed that the monk seal issue reflects the quality of collaboration with RAC/SPA. Indeed, diverse GFCM bycatch mitigation proposals were elaborated thanks to RAC/SPA information, fact which helped to take binding decisions to this respect.

Action Plan for the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea:

108. The Secretariat gave a presentation on activities carried out under the Action Plan on the conservation of Mediterranean cetaceans, which is featured in sections 7 and 8 of document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4 and set out in detail in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/Inf.7, which was prepared in conjunction with the Secretariat of ACCOBAMS.

109. The Executive Secretary of ACCOBAMS gave a presentation on the principal activities carried on in connection with the implementation of the Agreement in the Mediterranean. She explained that there were now 23 Contracting Parties to the Agreement, and that its geographical area had been extended to include the Atlantic exclusive economic zones of Spain and Portugal. In that respect, the Focal Points for the Agreement in attendance at the Meeting were encouraged to speed up the process of acceptance of the amendment, so that it could enter into force as quickly as possible. As for the activities, she pointed out that many of them had been carried out in the southern Mediterranean countries, thanks especially to funds available from the Supplementary Conservation Grants Fund. Fisheries and MPAs activities were addressed in synergy with RAC/SPA. Training of trainers was developed in the Adriatic and the Maghreb, while also training kits were prepared and sensitizing activities took place. She recalled that her Secretariat is member of the steering committee for the project on identification of SPAMI in open seas. Detailed information on these activities could be found in the ACCOBAMS website ([www.accobams.org](http://www.accobams.org)).

Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean marine turtles:

110. The Secretariat summarized the action being taken, involving both data collection and assistance to countries, especially in monitoring nesting sites and identifying migration routes and other critical habitats by satellite.

111. The Secretariat representative informed the meeting that the 4<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles was being prepared and would be organized by the Naples Zoological Station (a partner of the Action Plan) from 7 to 11 November 2011. The conference would be a further example of synergy between the Barcelona, Berne and Bonn conventions regarding these species.

112. Introducing document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/11 "Draft protocol for data collection and assessing the interaction of fishing with marine turtles", the Secretariat drew the attention of participants to the fact that the protocol was a response to a recommendation from the "Transversal workshop on selectivity improvement and bycatch reduction" (Tunis, Tunisia, 23-25 September 2009) and the provisions of the Action Plan for minimizing bycatches.

113. Answering the concerns expressed with regard to a possible overlapping among the activities undertaken by RAC/SPA and the GFCM on mitigation of fishing interactions with threatened species, notably turtles, the Secretariat recalled that species conservation needs different levels of intervention such as monitoring of nesting sites and identification of migratory routes and that fisheries problems, notably the reduction of bycatch and selectivity are addressed since 2008 in close collaboration with GFCM.

114. The representative of Croatia informed the meeting on the activities undertaken for the elaboration of the protocol or code of conduct in case of finding or observing injured or ill marine turtles, mammals or cartilaginous fishes, aimed to put in place an information network on these strandings.

115. The meeting endorsed, with some changes, the draft Protocol for data collection and assessing the interaction of fishing with marine turtles, as contained in Annex VII to this report.

Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea:

116. The Secretariat presented the activities undertaken in the frame of the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea. When referring to the relevant sections of the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.395/12 "Note relative to the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea and proposal of updated working programme and calendar" the Secretariat evoked the historic of elaboration and updating of the Action Plan since 1999 and proposed a project of updated working programme and calendar of implementation for this Action Plan for the period 2012-2017, taking account of the achievements reached in the frame of the Action plan and the amendments of the Annex II to the Protocol SPA/BD.

117. The representative of Malta informed the meeting that her country had undertaken the mapping of Posidonia meadows and has to date protected four zones around Malta. These zones, which embrace more than 85% of all the Posidonia meadows in Malta, have been accepted as Natura 2000 sites. She asked about the possibility for RAC/SPA to assist Malta to undertake the cartography of other vegetal formations.

118. The representative of Seagrass 2000 acknowledged RAC/SPA for the edition of the English version of the RAMOGE Guide on the Posidonia meadows and underlined that it constitutes an important tool for the countries. Regarding the climate change problematic he informed the meeting that an ongoing study proves that Posidonia meadows play an important role as carbon sinks. He has also remarked that Posidonia meadows undergo a strong degradation by towed gears even in areas where fishing is forbidden.

119. The meeting approved the project of calendar of implementation for the Action Plan for the conservation of the marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea for the period 2012-2017 (Annex VIII to the present report) for its adoption by the Contracting Parties at its next meeting.

Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes (chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea:

120. The Secretariat described the activities carried out within the Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes (chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea. RAC/SPA cooperated closely with the GFCM, working in synergy on means to reduce and mitigate bycatches of elasmobranches.

121. The RAC/SPA added that in 2009 the Parties to the Barcelona Convention had requested an updated scientific assessment of some of the elasmobranch species listed in Annex III, with a view to their inclusion in Annex II.

122. The participants considered the various species of cartilaginous fishes (chondrichthyans) presented in document (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/7), as sent to the SPA Focal Points with the appropriate advance notice laid down in the relevant procedures. The species forms were considered by the Meeting for submission to the Parties, with a recommendation for the amendment of Annexes II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol.

123. The Secretariat explained that since RAC/SPA had engaged the services of elasmobranch experts in order to verify the status of cartilaginous fish species found in the Mediterranean which should be included in those Annexes.

124. RAC/SPA also presented the "Draft Guidelines for shark and ray recreational fishing the Mediterranean" (UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/13), explaining that further details of the data registration procedures would be given in conjunction with the GFCM as soon as the mechanisms in question had been clearly defined by the latter's regulatory bodies for recreational fishing. The aim of the guidelines was to reduce the potentially harmful impact of recreational fishing activities, improve the monitoring of catches and encourage those engaged in recreational fishing to take part in gathering and managing data, and especially in programmes for tagging the species and returning them to the water.

125. The meeting considered the files concerning cartilaginous fish species (chondrichthyans) proposed for the amendment of Annexes II and III to the SPA/BD Protocol, and endorsed those documents given the status of the species in question, which were mostly at critical risk of extinction. These documents appear in Annexes IX to this report.

126. The representative of Italy pointed out that on the basis of the available data on the considered species, it was important to submit to the Parties the amendment proposals of Annexes II and III presented by the Secretariat.

127. However, the representative of the European Commission pointed out that his delegation as well as the delegations of member countries of the European Union, have to carry out internal consultations in order to define a common position. A scrutiny reserve on this issue was then expressed.

128. The representative of France recalled that the EU member States are subjected to the common fisheries policy. In this regard, a coordination is needed from the initial stages of Annexes amendment, in order to define a common position on the inclusion of species concerned by fisheries. A Scrutiny reserve is then requested on the document presented by the Secretariat.

129. The meeting agreed that comments, if any, on the proposed amendments must reach RAC/SPA by mid-July 2011.

130. The representative of Tunisia said that the two species of *Rhinobatos* now included in Annex III to the SPA/BD Protocol, and proposed for inclusion in Annex II, were quite abundant on southern coasts of Tunisia. She therefore had some reservations about including them in Annex II. She recommended carrying out research and fisheries management programmes, in conjunction with the GFCM, before making a decision on changing the status of those fish species.

131. Greenpeace, Oceana and WWF expressed their high concern about the critical situation of Mediterranean sharks and rays, and their extreme disappointment by the eventual decision to not consider these species as suitable for inclusion under Annex II.

Action Plan for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex II to the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean:

132. The Secretariat summarized activities conducted in the framework of the Action Plan for the conservation of the bird species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol, namely :

- organizing a national training course on methods of identifying and census birds, in conjunction with the ONCFS, followed by a campaign to list waterfowl along the entire Mediterranean coast of Egypt.
- organizing missions to monitor and ring the nesting populations of Lesser Crested Tern, and an inventory of waterfowl in Libya in winter.
- the preparation and publication of the Atlas of Birds of Libya in English and Arabic versions. This project is supported by the ONCFS and the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing.

133. The representative of the Conservatoire du Littoral congratulated RAC/SPA on its excellent work in the context of the Action Plan. He told the meeting of the outcome of the census of a species covered by the Action Plan, carried out at the Zembra site in Tunisia. The census had recorded 140,000 couples of Cory's Shearwaters, whereas previous records accounted for only 80,000 couples. He added that the activities of the Conservatoire in the framework of the Mediterranean Small Islands initiative were conducted in close cooperation with RAC/SPA.

134. In that connection, he announced that 10 monographs on species covered by the Action Plan were in preparation, and that the monitoring protocols were being harmonized. The results of both would be considered by Mediterranean experts at a seminar to be organized in September 2011.

Action Plan for the conservation of the coralligenous and other calcareous Mediterranean bio-concretions:

135. The Secretariat mentioned the activities undertaken in the context of the Action Plan for coralligenous and other calcareous Mediterranean bio-concretions, pointing out that those activities had already been presented under agenda item 6.a.

136. The representative of the Secretariat told the meeting that the participants at the expert meeting to propose standard methods for inventorying and monitoring coralligenous and maërl communities had said it was necessary to protect obscure populations living in submarine caves and canyons, and that an action plan for those formations, which were not covered by the other action plans, was essential.

137. The representative of Morocco emphasized the importance of obscure caves and deep habitats in terms of biological diversity. He recalled that during the expert meeting on coralligenous and Rhodolites, all the experts had underlined the richness of such biocenoses and they wanted them to be taken into consideration in a specific action plan, since they could not be included in the action plan for coralligenous.

138. He added that at the expert meeting on coralligenous, it was evident that there was a grave lack of data for those biocenoses on the southern side of the Mediterranean. For this purpose, special attention should be paid to that region of the Mediterranean by organizing survey campaigns and involving researchers from the South in various survey activities conducted elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

139. The representative of France emphasized the importance of deep habitats (deep corals, caves and canyons) and recalled that the work of the first mapping campaign for coralligenous habitats in Cap Corse had been carried out by the University of Corsica through the CAPCORAL project, financed by the AAMP.

140. Several delegations supported the proposal to draw up a specific action plan for obscure populations (submarine caves, canyons, etc.). The meeting mandated RAC/SPA

to study ways of drawing up such an action plan and to submit proposals for that purpose to the next meeting of the Contracting Parties.

### **C) Assessing and mitigating the impacts of threats to biodiversity**

141. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat described activities carried out in the context of implementation of the Action Plan concerning species introductions and invasive species in the Mediterranean Sea, as presented in document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4. The Secretariat also mentioned the initiative to set up a regional mechanism to gather, compile and disseminate information about non-indigenous invasive species in the Mediterranean region (including an early warning system) for which RAC/SPA had prepared a feasibility study. This initiative was due to begin during the second half of 2011, and would continue over the two-year period 2012-2013.

142. Some delegations took the floor to congratulate RAC/SPA on its activities and to emphasize the need to maintain and promote synergies between the MAP components dealing with the matter.

143. The representative of the European Commission said there should be more cooperation with IMO on the question of ballast waters, and suggested that a proposal be made to IMO to draw up a Memorandum of cooperation with RAC/SPA on the subject.

### **D) Training, coordination and technical assistance**

144. The Secretariat described the training activities of RAC/SPA, referring to the relevant sections of document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/4, which cover two key aspects :

- Strengthening capacities and training relating to SPAs and to the conservation of biodiversity, especially species ;
- The training programme in the framework of the MedMPAnet project.

145. On the first point, a number of activities had been started to strengthen national capacities for the management of SPAs and the conservation of species, either in the form of training courses organized and/or financed by RAC/SPA or as training modules provided during field missions.

146. In the framework of the MedMPAnet project, the efforts of RAC/SPA had been mainly in the area of on-the-job training and regional training courses organized in conjunction with the MedPAN South project.

147. Several delegates congratulated RAC/SPA on its training efforts and asked for them to be continued.

148. The representative of Morocco suggested that the Secretariat make an assessment of the actual needs of countries, and review existing training initiatives. He emphasized the need to improve the impact of the training provided by the various organizations, and to devise training activities in the framework of a consistent programme reflecting the needs of countries.

149. The representative of Cyprus requested the help of ACCOBAMS and RAC/SPA for the monitoring of cetaceans population in Cyprus.

150. The representatives of WWF-MedPO and MedPAN spoke of the ongoing initiative to establish a long-term strategy to strengthen capacity for the management of MPAs in the Mediterranean region. That initiative was being conducted in close collaboration with RAC/SPA, which chaired the steering committee comprising all the relevant organizations in the region. They also said that the findings of a feasibility study, now being carried out to assess the training needs of countries, would be ready by the end of the current year.

151. The Secretariat said that to improve the effectiveness of its regional training sessions, which normally involved only one participant for each country, the Secretariat would now promote the approach of training the trainers.

152. The representative of ACCOBAMS reiterated its interest in collaborating with RAC/SPA to strengthen the capacity of Mediterranean countries for the conservation of cetaceans.

### **Agenda Item 7 - Programme of work of RAC/SPA for 2012-2013**

153. The Director of RAC/SPA informed the meeting that having regard of budgetary constraints ordered by the UNEP/MAP for the biennia 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 (reduction of 15 to 20%) and having regard of the unfulfilled results of the Scientific Director recruitment process, the RAC/SPA envisages to not conclude such recruitment for the time being. This option, considered in coordination with the Coordinating Unit of MAP, will allow to allocate the funds budgeted for this permanent post to the implementation of other priorities, including those proposed in the current meeting. The work structure of the Centre will be reorganized consequently.

154. The Secretariat has afterwards presented the working programme for the next biennium 2012-2013 included in the document UNEP(DEPI)/MED WG.359/14. He indicated that the working programme will be submitted to the Contacting Parties, which will take the final decisions to this regard.

155. The meeting has then examined the activities proposed in the working programme and the participants have expressed remarks and suggestions on the content of the activities and on the implication of the partners in its implementation.

156. The representative of France regretted that the budget for the previous biennium did not appear next to the budgetary proposal made for the forthcoming biennial period, in order to show the budgetary evolutions, and she has requested the Secretariat to provide this information to the Focal Points after the meeting. Considering that this programme has been made taking into account the present budgetary context of the Barcelona Convention, she stressed the importance of prioritizing the programme of work for the forthcoming years around the main directions of the Protocol implementation, in collaboration with the other activity centres, in view of pooling means and optimizing costs. This prioritization of the working programme should be then made following these two main directions: the setting-up of a consistent MPA network in the Mediterranean, this action would contribute directly to a regional fulfillment of States commitments made in Nagoya in 2010; and species conservation. She also recalled her country's commitment to see the issues of conserving species as well as marine and coastal sites treated in the framework of the SPA/BD Protocol; she added that the ICZM thematic is also a very important work direction.

157. The representative of France has also proposed to held the meeting of Focal Points for SPAs back-to-back to the ones of other RACs which activities have a link with the SPA/BD Protocol, like the recent meetings of RAC/PAP, RAC/INFO and RAC/Blue

Plan. This will allow Focal Points to attend several meetings (on agenda items of direct relevance) facilitating the identification of possible synergies between the various decisions, the programmes implemented and the existent structures within the Barcelona Convention system.

158. On the activities related to the taxonomy, the delegation of France pointed out that after consulting national institutions involved in the monitoring of the work on taxonomy in the Mediterranean, it appears that there is no taxonomic referential for the whole species. It was proposed that RAC/SPA organize a technical workshop on defining taxonomic standards related to the CBD global initiative on taxonomy.

159. The Secretariat said that RAC/SPA must prepare before the end of May a new version of the working programme taking account of the remarks and suggestions of the meeting. This new version will be integrated within the general programme of the MAP components and submitted to the next meeting of Focal Points of MAP, planned on September 2011.

160. At the end of the works of the Meeting on the working programme, the representative of Greenpeace addressed a declaration in the name of Greenpeace, Oceana and WWF. This declaration is contained in Annex X of this report.

**Agenda Item 8 - Any other matters**

161. No other matters were raised for discussion.

**Agenda Item 9 - Adoption of the Report of the Meeting**

162. The Meeting reviewed the draft report prepared by the Secretariat, modified it and adopted the present report.

**Agenda Item 10 - Closure of the Meeting**

163. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Meeting was closed on Friday, 20 June 2011 at 4.50 p.m.